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ABSTRACT

This report examines the $4.5 million per biennium endowment that supports senior faculty members identified as "eminent scholars" in Ohio's post-secondary education system. Since its inception in 1983, the Eminent Scholars Program has awarded 36 chairs to six public universities with 21 chairs filled as of January 1991. All 21 Eminent Scholars have been male, 17 were white, 16 came from universities, 2 from outside the United States, and none were recruited from inside Ohio. Evaluation was conducted by visits to all six universities to conduct structured interviews with 12 Eminent Scholars as well as with students, administrators, faculty members, and university and Regents staff. Awards are given out in $500,000 blocks for nine chairs per biennium at public universities. Winning schools must match the endowment, and the interest from the total is used to support the selected scholar's work. Findings suggest that, although Eminent Scholars are supposed to address compelling statewide problems, most describe their achievements in terms of publications and research. A key concern noted was the availability of nine scholars per biennium. Among recommendations are that the program be suspended or reduced in size for at least two biennia while the program is systematically evaluated. Comments of the Board of Regents are attached. (NAV)

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COLUMBUS, OHIO
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OHIO
EMINENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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LEGISLATIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION OVERSIGHT
Columbus, Ohio

April 1991

OHIO EMINENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

RR-91-01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OHIO EMINENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

This Research Report examines the Ohio Eminent Scholars program funded through the Board of Regents. For this program, the General Assembly appropriates $4.5 million per biennium from the General Revenue Fund to help set up endowment funds at selected public universities. The endowment income is used to support senior faculty members. The program is part of a package of postsecondary education programs referred to collectively as "Selective Excellence."

This is a report of the Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) to the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. ***Conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of the LOEO staff and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Committee or any of its members.***

The General Assembly created the Eminent Scholars program in 1983 at the request of the Board of Regents. A total of 36 chairs have been awarded to six public universities, with 21 of the chairs filled as of January 1991.

To evaluate the program, LOEO staff visited all six universities and conducted structured interviews with 12 Eminent Scholars, as well as students, administrators, and faculty members. We also reviewed university and Regents staff publications as well as other literature.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

The Regents staff uses the $4.5 million appropriation in $500,000 blocks to endow nine chairs per biennium at public universities. Chairs are awarded based on statewide competition. The winning school must provide at least a $500,000 match to receive the money. Interest from the endowment fund is used to help support a professor.

Persons appointed to Eminent Scholar chairs are supposed to be "scholar-leaders of national or international visibility," according to the law authorizing the program. All Eminent Scholars named so far are male; 17 are white; 16 came from universities; two came from outside the United States; and none have been recruited from inside Ohio. There is no formal prohibition against finding Eminent Scholars already in Ohio, although at least two schools think there is.

The law says Eminent Scholars are supposed to bring "educational resources to bear on compelling statewide problems." In its original request for funding, the Regents staff said it would "develop a plan for the identification of statewide priorities." However, this was not done, and academic departments applying for an Eminent Scholar chair are permitted to define "compelling statewide problems."

In the program's first years, winning applications focused on economic development, effectively limiting competition to traditional "hard" sciences. Recent applications have incorporated quality-of-life considerations, and chairs have been awarded in contemporary history, German, and chamber music.

The Regents staff originally planned to review the program regularly. It later decided to monitor the program simply by asking universities to notify the Regents staff about the accomplishments of Eminent Scholars. This anecdotal method does not necessarily provide a balanced view, which is one reason LOEO was asked to do a more systematic study.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Regents staff has not developed criteria for evaluating departments' applications for Eminent Scholar chairs, or for evaluating Eminent Scholars who have been hired by the universities under this program. Thus, although the statute says the Eminent Scholars are supposed to address "compelling statewide problems," Eminent Scholars and university representatives tend to describe their achievements in terms of research and publications rather than in terms of addressing "statewide problems."

Nonetheless, Eminent Scholars generally have active research programs, and most also do at least some teaching. Many teach undergraduates.

The program is substantially more expensive than the $4.5 million outlay would appear. Universities are spending, from their general funds, substantially more than the amount of the state appropriation to recruit and support Eminent Scholars. The major sources of university general funds are state subsidy and student tuition, primarily undergraduate tuition.

A key concern emerging from the LOEO study is whether deserving departments and truly "eminent" scholars will continue to be available at the rate of nine per biennium into the indefinite future. We found that even some Eminent Scholars were not convinced of the quality of their departments, and that at least two universities were not seeking truly "eminent" scholars to fill their chairs.

LOEO recommends that:

* **Funding for the Eminent Scholars program be suspended for at least two biennia. No current Eminent Scholars or chairs already awarded would be affected by this recommendation.**

* **During that time, the Regents staff should be systematically collecting information about the Eminent Scholars program, so LOEO can conduct a more comprehensive assessment in a few years.**

* **If the General Assembly does not wish to suspend the program, the program should be reduced in size and much more closely monitored by Regents staff. No current Eminent Scholars or chairs already awarded would be affected by this recommendation.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I - INTRODUCTION 1
OVERVIEW 1
The Eminent Scholars program 2
SCOPE AND METHODS 3
Report organization 4

II - PROGRAM OPERATIONS 5
FINANCES 5
SELECTION OF WINNING DEPARTMENTS 6
SELECTION OF EMINENT SCHOLARS 8
REPORTING AND EVALUATION 9

III - PROGRAM EFFECTS 11
PROGRAM RESULTS 11
"Compelling statewide problems" 12
Instruction 13
Research 14
Ohio's reputation 14
FINANCES 15
Costs to the state General Revenue Fund . . . 16
Costs to the university 16
ADVERSE EFFECTS 20

IV - FUTURE OF THE PROGRAM 21
QUALITY OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS 21
SUPPLY OF "EMINENT" SCHOLARS 22

V - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 24
RECOMMENDATIONS 25

AGENCY COMMENTS 27

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) serves as staff to the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. Created by the Ohio General Assembly in 1989, the Office conducts studies of education-related activities funded wholly or in part by the state of Ohio. This Research Report examines the Eminent Scholars program, under which the Ohio General Assembly appropriates funds to the Ohio Board of Regents to endow academic chairs at public postsecondary institutions.

This is a report of LOEO to the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. ***Conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of the LOEO staff and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Committee or any of its members.***

OVERVIEW

The Eminent Scholars program was created by the General Assembly at the request of the Ohio Board of Regents in 1983 as one element of a postsecondary funding package termed "Selective Excellence." Funds are appropriated to the Board of Regents, and the Regents staff is responsible for administering the program.

According to a Regents staff publication, the Eminent Scholars program is "designed to elevate already excellent graduate and professional programs to national and international prominence." The same publication lists the other elements of the Selective Excellence package as:

* **Program Excellence**, which "encourages Ohio's state colleges and universities to identify their best undergraduate programs in a statewide academic competition for one-time enrichment grants";

* **Academic Challenge**, which "provides an incentive for four-year and two-year institutions to set priorities among their programs and build 'centers of excellence'"; each public college and university receives funds "to advance the quality of a limited number of programs selected for enhancement"; after six years, the state funding continues and the institution can shift the money to another program;

* **Research Challenge**, "to reward existing research and to stimulate new and expanded research efforts"; universities receive funds based on their success at raising external research money, then "invest these dollars in research projects in a variety of ways of their own choosing in order to encourage and leverage support for emerging ideas of high priority"; and

* **Productivity Improvement Challenge**, which "provides incentives to. . . community colleges, technical colleges, and university regional campuses to develop innovative approaches to increasing the participation of Ohioans in postsecondary education, job training, and retraining."

The Eminent Scholars and Research Challenge elements are targeted to graduate programs, according to the Regents staff. In addition, the Regents staff has begun describing the Ohio Supercomputer Center as an element of the Selective Excellence package.

The General Assembly funded an "Independent College Challenge" program in 1987 and 1988 to provide "competitive secured grants for. . . outstanding examples of liberal arts education in Ohio's private colleges," but did not continue the program in subsequent budgets.

The Eminent Scholars program

Since the Eminent Scholars program was first funded in 1983, a total of 36 Eminent Scholar chairs have been awarded. Awards have been made to Akron, Bowling Green, Cincinnati, Miami, Ohio University, and Ohio State University. For each chair, the state General Revenue Fund pays $500,000. The university must match that amount from private donors and maintain the endowment fund. General Revenue Fund appropriations have been constant at $4.5 million per biennium since 1983, funding nine chairs per biennium.

The Regents staff says Eminent Scholar chairs are awarded only to departments that can demonstrate outstanding quality, and can attain national or international rank with the addition of an Eminent Scholar. The law creating the program requires that

persons appointed to Eminent Scholar chairs must be "scholar-leaders of national or international visibility." As of January 1991, a total of 22 Eminent Scholars had been named to the 36 available chairs, but only 21 chairs were occupied--one Eminent Scholar resigned and has been replaced since the program began.

SCOPE AND METHODS

LOEO was asked to review the Eminent Scholars program because it is a key element in the Selective Excellence package, whose original appropriation for the current biennium totaled $58.4 million. LOEO reviewed the Eminent Scholars program to determine whether it appeared to be serving the purposes intended by the General Assembly. We did not evaluate any individual university, department, or Eminent Scholar, but rather tried to assess the program's effects statewide, using established techniques of systematic qualitative program evaluation.

In conducting the study, LOEO reviewed documents and research from Ohio and other states and visited every campus that has an Eminent Scholar chair. On the campuses, we interviewed administrators, students, and faculty, including 12 of the 21 Eminent Scholars in place as of January 1991.

Using structured interviews, we talked with at least one Eminent Scholar at each institution. At each institution with more than one chair filled, we met with at least half of the Eminent Scholars in place as of January 1991. For each Eminent Scholar we interviewed, we also conducted structured interviews with the department head or designee, several students, and university or college administrators responsible for the program.

Of the 21 Eminent Scholars in place as of January 1991, we conducted our battery of interviews for 12. Two were not visited because of LOEO's time constraints. Of the remaining seven:

* Five, at four different universities, had been in place four months or less at the time of our visit.

* One was out of the U.S. when we visited his campus.

* One did not respond to our attempts to arrange a visit.

LOEO appreciates the outstanding cooperation and assistance we received from the Regents staff and from every campus and individual we surveyed in preparing this report. We especially appreciate those individuals or organizations who took the time to prepare thoughtful responses to our earlier drafts.

Report organization

Chapter II of the report briefly describes the operation of the Eminent Scholars program. Chapter III summarizes what LOEO found to be the program's effects. Chapter IV describes some concerns about the program that emerged from our review. Chapter V contains our conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Since Ohio's Selective Excellence package was first funded in 1983, a total of 36 Eminent Scholar chairs have been awarded to public universities. Exhibit II-1 lists the institutions and departments that have received funding under this program.

In the competition for each biennium's chairs, contending departments explain how the scholars would enhance the quality of the departments, the university, and the state as a whole. The staff of the Ohio Board of Regents, in consultation with various panels of experts, selects the departments to be awarded the endowed chairs.

The statutory language for the Eminent Scholars program has been included, essentially unchanged, in each biennial appropriations act since 1983. The current language (in Amended Substitute House Bill 111 of the 118th General Assembly) says the funds are to be used by the Board of Regents:

> . . . to establish an Ohio Eminent Scholars Program for the purpose of fostering the growth of eminence in Ohio's academic programs while bringing educational resources to bear on compelling statewide problems. Endowment grants to state colleges and universities to match endowment gifts from nonstate sources may be made in accordance with a plan established by the Ohio Board of Regents, and shall have as their purpose attracting and sustaining in Ohio scholar-leaders of national or international visibility. Such scholar-leaders shall, among their duties, share broadly the benefits and knowledge unique to their field of scholarship to the betterment of Ohio and its people.

FINANCES

Appropriations for the program have been stable at $4.5 million per biennium since its inception, all from the state's General Revenue Fund. In a biennial statewide competition, the funds are awarded in $500,000 blocks to endow chairs in nine specific departments within public universities. This means that the state funds, along with university matching funds, are then

placed in an account at each university, and the interest from the account is used to support the work of the faculty member selected for the endowed chair.

Once the university demonstrates that it has raised at least the minimum $500,000 match from private sources, the state funds are disbursed to the university. Selection of an Eminent Scholar often is not completed for up to several years after the state funds are paid out. With few exceptions, the search for an Eminent Scholar takes at least two years. In the meantime, the state and matching funds accrue interest for the university, which the university can use to augment the chair's endowment or to finance the search. Most use the interest to increase the endowment amount.

According to the Board of Regents' policy for this program, the president of a winning university may reallocate the endowed chair to a different department after ten years. No chairs have been in existence long enough for this to have occurred, and no universities or departments told us of any plans to reallocate endowed Eminent Scholar chairs. In fact, many campus officials were unaware of this provision.

SELECTION OF WINNING DEPARTMENTS

The process of filling an Eminent Scholar chair has two phases. First, the chairs are awarded to specific departments in public universities, then each winning department must locate and recruit an Eminent Scholar to take the position.

According to the Regents staff, Eminent Scholar chairs are to be awarded only to departments that have demonstrated outstanding quality. To receive an award, a department is supposed to show that it has already attracted faculty and students of very high quality, and might be propelled into the first rank of departments nationally with the addition of a "scholar-leader of national or international visibility" to its faculty. This determination of program quality is made by the expert panels appointed by the Regents staff. The panel makes site visits and reviews each department's written application for an Eminent Scholars endowment.

EXHIBIT II-1

UNIVERSITY	DEPARTMENT	APPROVED	FILLED
Akron	Polymer Science	1984	1986
	Polymer Science	1988	1990
Bowling Green	Chemistry	1986	1988
	Philosophy	1988	1990
	Psychology	1990	
Cincinnati	Electronic/Computer Engineering	1984	1988
	Chemistry	1984	1986
	Mechanical/Industrial Engineering	1984	1987
	Architecture	1986	1989
	Chemical Engineering	1986	
	Microbiology	1986	
	Aerospace Engineering	1988	
	Physiology	1988	
	Music	1988	
	Quantitative Analysis/Information Systems	1990	
Miami	Zoology	1986	1989
Ohio University	Biochemistry	1984	1988
	History	1988	1990
	Film	1990	
Ohio State University	Chemistry	1984	1984
	Industrial Design (first appointment)	1984	
	(second appointment)		1989
	Biochemistry	1984	1986
	Mathematics	1984	1988
	Microbiology	1986	1989
	Physics	1986	1988
	Geology/Mineralogy	1986	1988
	Mechanical Engineering	1986	1991
	Materials Science and Engineering	1988	1990
	Chemistry	1988	1989
	Biochemistry	1988	
	German	1990	
	Astronomy	1990	
	Geodetics	1990	
	Physics	1990	
	Psychology	1990	
	Agronomy/Entomology	1990	

In its original testimony requesting the program in 1983, the Regents staff said the Board of Regents would "develop a plan for the identification of state priorities." However, no criteria exist for determining whether a department's proposal meets the statutory requirement for "bringing educational resources to bear on compelling statewide problems." The determination is made by evaluating the narrative portions of each application separately.

In the program's first years, winning applications tended to emphasize economic development, and competition was effectively limited to the traditional "hard" sciences. In later rounds, according to Regents staff, more consideration has been given to quality-of-life issues, so humanities and social science departments are now better able to compete successfully.

SELECTION OF EMINENT SCHOLARS

The question of how to tell whether Eminent Scholars actually are the "scholar-leaders of national or international visibility" specified by the law is similarly left open by the Regents staff. After a chair is awarded, there is no state-level review of the university's choice of an individual to fill the chair.

Winning departments most often recruit their Eminent Scholars in the same way they recruit other faculty members. At one university, graduate students served on the search committee, but this appears to be standard practice for that department's faculty searches.

Most Eminent Scholar searches took several years to complete. A number of chairs awarded in 1988 are still vacant. Virtually all departmental representatives said they have had problems identifying scholars of sufficient eminence who could be recruited for the amounts of money available through the program.

Other departments have said they did not seek true "scholar-leaders" for that reason. A department head said, "We decided to go for an 'imminent' instead of an 'eminent' scholar--someone who we thought would prove very productive in the near future." This strategy may seem realistic, but it is not consistent with the statutory language creating the program.

Of the 22 Eminent Scholars named as of January 1991:

* all are male;
* one is African-American, four are Asian-Americans, and 17 are white;

* five were recruited from industry, one from the federal government, and 16 from universities;
* one came to Ohio from Canada, one from the United Kingdom, and 20 from all regions of the United States, but none have been recruited from within Ohio;
* two have Canadian citizenship, three are British subjects, and 17 are U.S. citizens.

There is no formal prohibition against naming Eminent Scholars from within Ohio, or even from within the winning departments. One university has adopted a formal policy forbidding this, and at least two others believe there is a formal requirement that Eminent Scholars come from outside Ohio.

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

When a department is awarded an Eminent Scholar chair, the Regents staff's notification to the university includes this requirement for review and evaluation:

> The Ohio Board of Regents will serve as the agency responsible for verification that the goals, objectives and conditions (both academic and fiscal) which have been specified in the proposal by the grantee institution are being met. . . . Progress reports covering both program and fund information will be required annually for the first ten years of the program. . . . At the end of five years, there will be an appraisal of program progress by an appropriate review team selected by the Ohio Board of Regents.

However, the Regents staff says it has decided to forego these reports and reviews. The staff's executive officer says:

> We have found that while a formal periodic update on Eminent Scholar activities is valuable, we have been accomplishing our need to find out about Eminent Scholar activities in a less formalized way through conversations between Ohio Board of Regents staff and university representatives. We feel very confident that we are keeping up with Eminent Scholar activities.

A Regents staff member says that the staff "early on" asked each university to summarize "the accomplishments of the Eminent Scholars." Such a request is highly unlikely to elicit negative information, and no such information was included in any documents we received from Regents staff. In any case, at every campus we visited, Eminent Scholars and their departmental representatives said they had never been asked for a formal report of any kind.

CHAPTER III

PROGRAM EFFECTS

The Regents staff has not developed specific criteria by which to evaluate the Eminent Scholars program. LOEO conducted interviews and reviewed literature on similar programs in other states, and examined Ohio's program to determine whether several benefits had been realized by the state of Ohio.

First, as specified in statute, we looked for Eminent Scholars' activities related to "compelling statewide problems." Second, we looked at Eminent Scholars' participation in instruction and research to determine the program's compliance with the statutory expectation that Eminent Scholars would be "bringing educational resources to bear" on problems and "fostering the growth of eminence in Ohio's academic programs." Third, we looked at the program's effect on Ohio's academic reputation to assess whether the Eminent Scholars "share broadly the benefits and knowledge unique to their field of scholarship to the betterment of Ohio and its people." We also examined the program's financial costs and other effects.

PROGRAM RESULTS

Universities and departments awarded Eminent Scholar chairs have used their Eminent Scholars in a variety of ways. Some require Eminent Scholars to teach, others entirely exempt them from teaching; some expect high levels of research and publication, others want more attention to the internal needs of the department or university. Thus, specific outcomes expected from the program may vary across or even within universities. In trying to assess the program's results, LOEO looked at each winning department's application and tried to determine the extent to which the goals stated in the application had been met since the arrival of the Eminent Scholar.

We found the individual Eminent Scholar's personality to be a key determinant of how a department fared on our proposed criteria. Most Eminent Scholars were described by colleagues, students, and department heads as outgoing, supportive of and involved in the institution, and anxious to share their knowledge and skills with others. The departments housing those Eminent Scholars also appeared to be the ones enjoying the greatest success with the program.

On the other hand, departments seemed less successful in meeting the objectives of the program if people in the department described their Eminent Scholars as "ambitious," "aggressive," or "having something to prove." For example, one department head said of the local Eminent Scholar, "He doesn't mind helping someone else if it doesn't interfere with his own program." Neither this Eminent Scholar nor any of his assistants is involved in teaching or otherwise furthering the mission of the department; he was described as "not very active in the department--he and the people in his lab keep to themselves."

Overall, the program's benefits should be those apparently intended by the General Assembly in funding it. We examined the program statewide to look for evidence of:

* action on "compelling statewide problems";
* improvement of undergraduate and graduate instruction;
* enrichment of research; and
* enhancement of Ohio's reputation.

"Compelling statewide problems"

The Regents staff told the General Assembly in 1983 that the Board of Regents would "develop a plan for the identification of priorities," but later decided not to do so. A Regents staff publication on the Selective Excellence package says the institutions are "to address compelling needs of the state, as they define them" [emphasis in original].

Thus, there are no overall criteria for either determining what constitutes "compelling statewide problems" or evaluating progress in solving them. LOEO therefore examined the applications submitted by winning departments and the achievements they reported to us.

None of the Eminent Scholars we spoke with had reviewed the department's application for the award recently enough to recall what "compelling statewide problems" they were supposed to be addressing. They and their departmental representatives tended to describe the Eminent Scholars' achievements in terms of research grants, publications, and conferences, rather than in terms of "problems" addressed or resolved.

This situation may be unavoidable with the current structure of the Eminent Scholars program. Higher status in academic departments is ordinarily accorded researchers whose work is less

applied. In fact, most Eminent Scholars told us that a key attraction of an endowed chair was that it provided a stable funding source, allowing them to do research with a longer-term payoff. One said, "It's not mostly money--it's the ability to do the work that matters to Eminent Scholar-level people."

In the first years of the program, winning departments were in the physical sciences, and their definitions of statewide problems centered around research that would spur economic development. In later awards, according to the Regents staff, "compelling statewide problems" has been defined more broadly, allowing departments other than traditional sciences to compete. Recent awards have been made for chairs in contemporary history, chamber music, and German. However, these chairs are still vacant or have been filled for only a short time.

Instruction

With few exceptions, we found Eminent Scholars active in teaching, primarily at the graduate level. Three Eminent Scholars specifically said they were attracted to the position because of the opportunity to teach, although two others said they were attracted because they would not have to teach.

Several Eminent Scholars are developing new courses, curricula, and degree programs. Many of these efforts involve more than one academic department. In one striking example of interdepartmental innovation, Miami University's Eminent Scholar in zoology is working with another faculty member from the geology department to develop a course to be taught in the business school.

Eminent Scholars who teach were usually rated by the students we interviewed as very good instructors. They are described as challenging and demanding, but also as exciting and supportive of students' work. Virtually all the Eminent Scholars who supervise laboratory work are considered very accessible by their students. One graduate student said the Eminent Scholars program "allows middle-class students who can't afford to go to a private school a chance to work with a world-class scientist--even as an undergraduate."

Quite a few graduate students, including some from other countries, say they were attracted to the department because of the Eminent Scholar's presence there. No students said this of Eminent Scholars who did not teach, however.

Research

Ohio's Eminent Scholars generally have active research and publication programs, and all but a few have published or collaborated with faculty from other Ohio universities, or from other departments in their own universities. Many of their graduate students have also published research in scholarly journals under their guidance, and at least one graduate student we talked to holds part of a patent as a result of working with an Eminent Scholar.

A few Eminent Scholars collaborate very little with others, although they have strong individual publication records. We observed that these seem to be the same Eminent Scholars who also teach very little.

In most departments, Eminent Scholars had either brought external research funding with them, or had attracted funding for research projects since arriving in Ohio. As of April 1990, the Regents staff told us, external research funding attributed to Eminent Scholars statewide totaled about $11.4 million. If all chairs were filled with Eminent Scholars attracting funding at this rate, LOEO projects that statewide this figure would be approximately $19.5 million. The General Revenue Fund has expended $18 million to endow those chairs.

The external fund raising of Eminent Scholars may or may not be greater than that of their departmental colleagues; LOEO could not identify reliable data on this. It is even more difficult to determine the extent to which research funding addresses the statutory purposes of the Eminent Scholars program--to bring "educational resources to bear on compelling statewide problems," and to share broadly the Eminent Scholars' knowledge "to the betterment of Ohio and its people."

Any research done by any professor may benefit Ohio. However, there are not established state priorities as to what research is most needed, and no reliable data are available on the nature, type, or objective of Eminent Scholars' research compared to that of other faculty members. LOEO is therefore unable to determine whether this body of research meets the statutory requirements.

Ohio's reputation

Several Eminent Scholars and departmental representatives said that a major benefit of the program was enhancement of Ohio's reputation in the national scientific community. One Eminent Scholar said, "Ohio is not a huge magnet for high-quality faculty

and students." Another said, "There is sort of a credibility gap with Ohio--people don't think serious science happens here."

A department chair summarized this view: "If states like Ohio want to play in the big leagues, we have to do more than the states that are viewed as the intellectual centers--and Ohio isn't. For that reason, this program gets visibility far out of proportion to how much it costs, especially in terms of recruiting faculty."

In other words, several key beneficiaries of the Eminent Scholars program believe it may be as important in securing minimal acceptance for Ohio as in promoting excellence. One university representative said, "What this buys us is a seat at the table for Ohio when [grants] are decided or [plans] are made or rules are drafted." We also found some evidence of conferences that took place at Ohio universities because of the presence of Eminent Scholars.

There seem to be many examples of faculty members--in one case, a department chair--who were attracted to Ohio by the prospect of having one or another of the Eminent Scholars as a colleague. One department reports successfully recruiting faculty from the University of Chicago, Cornell, and Johns Hopkins with the aid of its Eminent Scholar. At least two Eminent Scholars were attracted by the presence of existing Eminent Scholars in the same college or department.

However, two Eminent Scholars and their department heads suggested that the major advantage of having an Eminent Scholar chair was to improve the department's standing in interdepartmental politics on the campus.

FINANCES

Costs of the Eminent Scholars program include financial and nonmonetary costs, both direct and indirect, incurred by the state treasury and by each winning university. Nonmonetary costs are difficult to quantify, but nonetheless real.

In financial terms, Eminent Scholars can be quite expensive. One university's fiscal officer said, "As a rule of thumb the University expects to spend three or four dollars for every dollar provided by the state to establish an Eminent Scholar position." Our analysis of data provided by the universities suggests that this is an accurate estimate statewide.

Costs to the state General Revenue Fund

The General Assembly has appropriated $4.5 million every biennium since 1983 to endow Eminent Scholar chairs at $500,000 per chair. Thus, 36 chairs have been endowed so far, at a total direct cost of $18 million from the state General Revenue Fund.

The Regents staff releases the money to each winning university as soon as the university certifies that it has in hand the required $500,000 match from private donations. Most universities make the required match immediately from their foundations' funds, then seek donations to repay the foundation. The university thus obtains and earns interest on the legislatively appropriated funds right away, even though the search for an Eminent Scholar often takes years.

The true cost to the state's General Revenue Fund, therefore, includes the interest foregone when funds are disbursed before they are needed. This amounts to at least an additional $2 million to date. Most universities use the funds to increase the amount of the chair's endowment, rather than to pay recruiting or start-up costs.

Costs to the university

Universities awarded Eminent Scholar chairs experience at least two types of direct financial cost, and perhaps some hidden financial costs as well. Especially in the physical sciences, the cost of acquiring an Eminent Scholar includes the cost of setting up and furnishing laboratories and offices. A February 12, 1990, article in Newsweek noted:

> Major research universities now expect to pay more than $1 million a year in "start-up packages." These can include such non-monetary but highly sought-after bonuses as guarantees never to have to teach an undergraduate. "The real cost of the competition is not in salary; it's in set-up costs, in new lab space, in research assistants and in time off from teaching," says Robert Rosenzweig, president of the Association of American Universities.

This has been the experience of Ohio public universities that have been awarded Eminent Scholar chairs. The Regents staff told LOEO, "We are finding that our universities are committing significant amounts of their resources (in excess of the base $500,000 required) to support their Eminent Scholar." One university administrator said, "The start-up costs were quite a surprise," and then proposed that the legislature should provide additional funds to winning universities to offset those costs.

In the 18 cases where LOEO was able to locate both estimated costs from the original application and actual costs incurred by the winning institution, the actual costs exceed the original estimates--usually substantially. A department chair, who said the department's other faculty could not get new equipment because of the Eminent Scholar's needs, said that cost considerations would eventually impair the Eminent Scholars program. "If an Eminent Scholar paralyzes a department, why would anybody want one?" he asked.

To match the General Assembly's $18 million appropriations for endowments, universities will have to set aside more than $27 million. This is because several of the institutions require winning departments to provide more than an even match for the $500,000 General Revenue Fund share. The university share of endowment is supposed to be raised from "nonstate sources," according to statute.

Based on data provided by universities, LOEO estimates that the winning universities have spent about $18.3 million in start-up costs for Eminent Scholars already appointed. We estimate vacant chairs will require an additional $16.8 million for start-up once all Eminent Scholars are named.

Continue annual costs to support Eminent Scholars now total an estimated $5.3 million statewide. When all chairs are filled, we estimate this will increase to $8.7 million. A generous estimate of endowment income would be $4.1 million annually statewide.

Thus, total allocations, once all chairs are filled, are estimated at:

TRANSFERS TO ENDOWMENT	
University share	$27.3 million
State appropriation	$18.0 million
TOTAL	$45.3 million
START-UP COSTS	$35.1 million
CONTINUING ANNUAL COSTS	$8.7 million
Less endowment income	-$4.1 million
TOTAL	$4.6 million

Start-up costs and net continuing annual costs are paid primarily from university general funds. The main sources of university general funds are student tuition and state instructional subsidy.

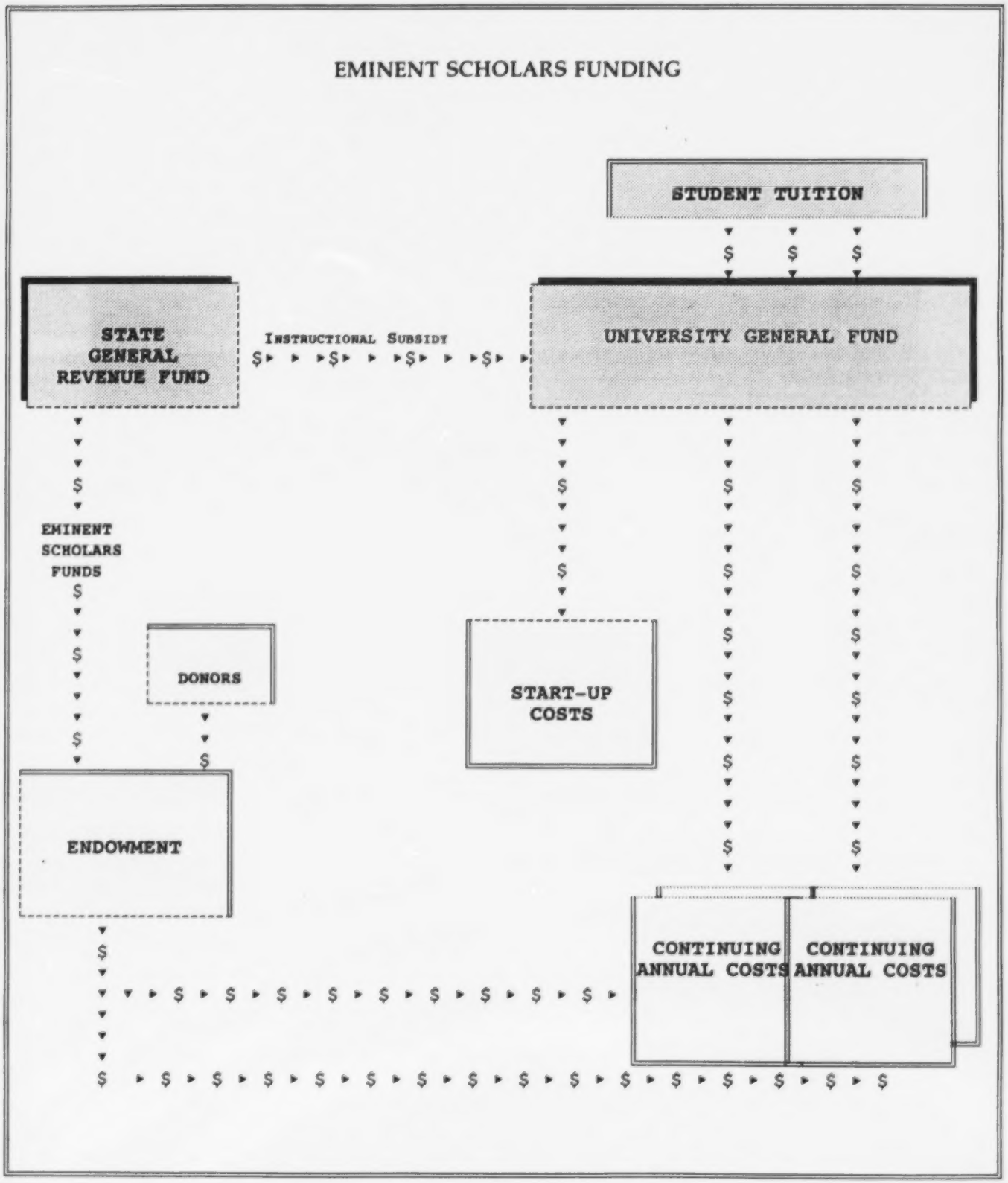
Exhibit III-1 displays the flow of funds to support Eminent Scholars in Ohio public universities.

Many Eminent Scholars have succeeded in attracting considerable outside funding for research. However, this funding is used to support specific research projects of the Eminent Scholar, and does not relieve the burden on university or department general funds.

The only financial benefit to the host institution is in the overhead or indirect cost charges it makes against outside research funding. Unless these charges fully cover the institutions' actual costs, universities are providing indirect or overhead support to Eminent Scholars' externally funded research. LOEO did not attempt to identify or quantify this support.

Some universities have incurred indirect or hidden costs related to the Eminent Scholars program. Two institutions, for example, have established internal designations of distinguished professorships, usually with salary supplements attached. University representatives said this was in part an attempt to defuse resentment of Eminent Scholars among current faculty members. LOEO did not attempt to identify or quantify such costs.

EXHIBIT III-1



ADVERSE EFFECTS

A department head at Indiana University, writing about faculty recruitment activities like Ohio's Eminent Scholars program, expressed concern about the effect of such programs on the morale of existing faculty. She said universities may be creating "a permanently demoralized and humiliated associate professor rank--one that contains good, solid teachers who will never have a very high market value."

This is not just an emotional effect. Because of the high cost of recruiting, setting up, and maintaining an Eminent Scholar, several department heads told us, they have very little money left to spend on existing faculty. According to an Ivy League dean recently interviewed by Newsweek, "It's going to be difficult for salaries to go up very much [across the board] because universities don't have the wherewithal to pay more."

Several Ohio department heads told us they expected to lose some of their existing senior faculty members to other states' "Eminent Scholar" programs, especially after those professors have seen "the kind of deal an Eminent Scholar can demand," as one department chair put it. A commentator in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, State-Times said about that state's proposed Eminent Scholars program, "I wonder how many 'good' scholars we could keep for the price of one 'Eminent' Scholar." The president of Yale University was recently quoted in the New York Times as saying significant budget cuts were caused in part by "increasing competition for faculty stars."

The imbalance among faculty members created by a "star system" such as the Eminent Scholars program can have significant long-term effects. When other faculty members' salaries and equipment requests are held down by the need to support an Eminent Scholar, the Indiana University department chair notes, she doubts her discipline's ability to recruit "bright young people who expect to pursue a reasonably compensated profession." An Ohio administrator echoed this concern, noting, "The lifeblood of a university is bringing in new assistant professors and building them up."

These real and potential adverse effects may take years to develop fully in any one department. LOEO did not try to identify or quantify all such effects, but we did hear "early warnings" in some departments--for example, those in which Eminent Scholars' expenses were consuming most or all of a department's discretionary budget authority.

CHAPTER IV

FUTURE OF THE PROGRAM

Two key questions about the direction of the Eminent Scholars program emerged during our research:

1. Can academic departments at Ohio public universities meet the Regents staff's requirement of demonstrating that they are already of outstanding quality, at the current funding rate of nine Eminent Scholar chairs every two years?

2. Can Ohio attract "scholar-leaders of national or international visibility," at the rate of nine every two years?

In considering these questions, we accepted the Regents staff's position that the Eminent Scholars program should be primarily directed toward graduate programs, and that chairs should be awarded only to departments that could demonstrate excellence. These criteria are not in statute or rule, however, nor is it specified that nine chairs be funded.

QUALITY OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

The Regents staff says departments are not awarded Eminent Scholar chairs unless they can demonstrate that their programs are already excellent, and that an Eminent Scholar will provide the needed impetus to propel the department into national or international prominence. It is unclear whether nine departments every biennium into the indefinite future can demonstrate this level of excellence.

LOEO found evidence that some chairs may already have been awarded to departments that did not meet this criterion. In our interviews, we asked the Eminent Scholars what had induced them to accept their positions here. Only two--both from the program's earlier years--mentioned the reputation of the department. Two others mentioned the presence of existing Eminent Scholars.

In contrast, one department head said the Eminent Scholar "brought new blood to the department, which was frankly getting stale." Three Eminent Scholars said of their departments or programs:

"The program was practically dead when I arrived."

"[The program] was small and demoralized when I came."

"The department was weak when I got here, and [his university] is not world-class or even first-rank nationally in [his field]."

This suggests that either the Regents staff's mechanisms for selecting excellent departments are not working as well as they might, or that the need to expend appropriations by endowing chairs has outrun the supply of excellent departments applying for those chairs.

SUPPLY OF "EMINENT" SCHOLARS

As with departments, the issue of individual scholars has two components: Have Eminent Scholars selected so far met the statutory criterion, and will Ohio be able to recruit nine people who meet the criterion every biennium in the future?

LOEO found that most current Eminent Scholars are highly qualified as researchers and as teachers. Many, in fact, may very well be the "scholar-leaders of national or international visibility" specified by the General Assembly.

We found evidence that this criterion is not applied in all cases. Department heads at two different universities told us, for example, that they had decided to recruit "imminent, rather than eminent, scholars." In other words, they sought persons who had not achieved "national or international visibility," but whom they hoped would do so during their tenure in Ohio. Even if those departments guessed correctly about those individuals, this is not what the General Assembly clearly specified for the Eminent Scholars program.

Almost all Eminent Scholars and institution representatives mentioned the difficulty of recruiting people to Ohio who meet the statutory criterion. They usually offered one or more of three reasons for this:

* At least 25 states have similar programs, and the supply of truly eminent scholars is limited;

* The cost to attract and maintain such a person is well beyond not only the expected endowment income, but also the additional amounts that most universities and departments are willing and able to pay; and

* Ohio is not perceived as an attractive location for world-class scholars and scientists.

Two universities that have received more than one award have adopted different philosophies about whom to appoint to their Eminent Scholar chairs. One university has had chairs vacant for several years because, according to an official, the institution insists that its winning departments meet the statutory criterion. He said, for example, "We told one department they couldn't make an offer to a guy because he was no better than our current guys."

The other university was one of the two where department representatives told us they had decided on imminence rather than eminence. One of its "imminent" scholars told us, "Ohio is not competitive for truly eminent scholars."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Eminent Scholars program has resulted in some benefits for winning departments of Ohio's public universities. Almost all Eminent Scholars are active in teaching--many, in fact, teach undergraduates. Several have been instrumental in attracting faculty members and graduate students to Ohio. They have conducted some research that has received national attention. Overall, the program has probably helped to improve Ohio's image as a place where "serious science happens," as one Eminent Scholar put it.

However, it is not an inexpensive program, despite the relatively small amount of General Revenue Fund money directly appropriated to it. Statewide, winning universities have spent approximately $4 for every $1 they received from the state's General Revenue Fund, and annual spending on Eminent Scholars will exceed endowment income by about $5 million. Much of the universities' expenditures come from their general funds, whose main revenue sources are the state's instructional subsidy (financed by the state General Revenue Fund) and student fees.

In addition, the "star system" represented by the Eminent Scholars program has indirect costs--existing faculty of equally high quality may decide to leave Ohio, for example, and at least two universities have decided to offer additional titles and stipends to existing faculty to alleviate this.

The statutory language creating the program, written by the Regents staff, is imprecise. The Regents staff has provided little additional guidance or oversight. Regents staff has not established formal criteria or methods for assessing the program's processes or outcomes, and has decided not to enforce its original reporting requirements.

In fact, it is unclear that state funding for this program is actually needed. The executive officer of the Regents staff says:

> The outstanding departments that have received Eminent Scholar awards did not choose to search for new senior scholars only because of this program; seeking additional academic leadership at the senior level is something they would have been doing in any case.

That is, the Eminent Scholars program uses state General Revenue Fund money to encourage "outstanding departments" to seek private funding for endowed chairs--"something they would have been doing in any case."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The burden of proof that any program is effective rests with the agency seeking funding for it. When the agency does not or cannot do so, LOEO conducts a systematic assessment to try to demonstrate that the program's positive effects outweigh its costs and other negative effects, and whether the positive or negative effects are more likely to dominate in the future. Neither the Regents staff's anecdotal approach nor LOEO's evaluation has been able to demonstrate that the Eminent Scholars program should be continued in its present form.

LOEO RECOMMENDS that the General Assembly suspend funding of the Eminent Scholars program for at least two biennia. This will allow time for 1990 chairs to be filled, and for most Eminent Scholars to have had some impact in their respective disciplines. During that time, the General Assembly should require the Board of Regents to direct its staff to collect objective, preferably quantifiable, data on at least the following items:

* the numbers, types, and levels of courses taught by Eminent Scholars and their non-Eminent colleagues;

* the type and amount of research conducted by Eminent Scholars and their non-Eminent colleagues, including the amount and type of external research funding they have attracted and how those funds were used;

* the amount and ultimate source of all funds used to support Eminent Scholars, compared to their non-Eminent colleagues;

* the national and international reputations of winning departments and of departments that applied for Eminent Scholar chairs but did not win;

* the number and type of non-Eminent faculty who have come to Ohio because of the Eminent Scholars program;

* the number and type of non-Eminent faculty who have left Ohio because of the Eminent Scholars program.

After four years, LOEO should be directed to determine the reliability of these data, and to evaluate the program again, using these data if possible. If the program can be shown to be cost-effective, it should be recommenced.

If the General Assembly does not wish to suspend the program entirely, the above evaluation should still be required. In addition, the program should be restructured along these lines:

1. Reduce to two the number of chairs to be awarded in each biennium, and increase the allowable maximum funding for each chair to $1 million with an equal match required from private sources. This will address two issues: the possible dilution of quality, and the asserted inadequacy of the endowment size.

2. Allow the Board of Regents to encumber the entire appropriation for up to three years, but do not allow the funds to be disbursed to a university until an Eminent Scholar is ready to assume the position. If the winning department cannot attract a true Eminent Scholar within three years, the award should be revoked.

3. Require the Board of Regents to adopt formal rules defining key terms in statute, including objective criteria for excellence of a winning department, eminence of a person to be offered a chair, and compelling statewide problems to be addressed. The requirement should include a mandate that the Board of Regents establish a method for objectively describing all benefits and all costs of the program. This will enhance accountability and provide better information for decisionmakers if the program is to be continued.

4. Consider a requirement that persons named to Eminent Scholar chairs carry the same teaching load required of other faculty of the same rank. This will ensure that Eminent Scholars participate in the most important function of the public universities employing them.

No current Eminent Scholar, and no chair already awarded, would be affected by the suspension or termination of General Revenue Fund support for this program. This is because Eminent Scholar chairs are supported by income from the endowment established with the General Revenue Fund money. These endowments are now held at the universities, and do not depend on continuing state funding for their existence or stability.

AGENCY COMMENTS

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April 1, 1991

The Honorable Daniel P. Troy
Ohio House of Representatives
Riffe Center, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative Troy:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the final report of the Legislative Office of Educational Oversight on the Ohio Eminent Scholars Program. We will try to share with you as clearly as possible our continuing concern for the basic premises and structures of this report as well as its conclusions. As you may know, we have provided a great deal of written information in our previous responses, so I will keep the length of this new document to a minimum. I would note, however, that because the initial drafts convey important information about the perceptions of the program by the LOEO, we consider those drafts and our comments on them to be an integral part of our full response to the review of the Ohio Eminent Scholars Program and would ask your attention be given to them as well.

The formal Ohio Board of Regents comments on the Ohio Eminent Scholars Program report are appended and endeavor to register our continuing concerns with the overall report. We remain troubled by a less than full understanding of the program and its purposes. The report lacks information on the selection process for Ohio Eminent Scholar Program awards, a critical factor in understanding this Program's purposes. Without this information, the factual picture of the program presented in the report is obscured by errors of omission.

We all share, I am confident, a desire to see that this program and all programs of the state function at their highest possible level. We believe that this program has and is doing so. We remain supportive of the idea of independent evaluation of programs within higher education, agreeing entirely with the idea that no agency should have sole responsibility for the evaluation of a program

that it has helped to develop. I would offer for consideration the suggestion of several university presidents that a national peer review team be impaneled to assess the effectiveness of the Ohio Eminent Scholars Program and to make recommendations for its improvement.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the report.

Sincerely,

Elaine H. Hairston
Chancellor

cc: Mr. Paul M. Marshall

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Ohio Board of Regents
Comments on LOEO's Evaluation
of
the Eminent Scholar Program[1]

Overview: Objectives and Achievements of the Eminent Scholar Program

In our responses to the first two draft reports we observed that the report evidenced a fundamental lack of understanding of the purposes of the Eminent Scholar program and consequently also of the benefits it brings to Ohio. In support of this conclusion, we cited numerous examples from the drafts that illustrated misunderstanding of the program or biases against university research or both. In apparent response, those passages have been progressively removed or modified (last to go, for example, was the one that dismissed the importance of the Eminent Scholars' external research funding because it "...supports only their own work."[2]) Unfortunately, the changes in the report's assertions have not been accompanied by any new conclusions-- the logical outcome of such modifications. We must, therefore, continue to state that the report does not reflect an understanding of the objectives of the Eminent Scholar program nor does it note the value to our economy of university-performed basic and applied research.

Perhaps an historical overview will help to clarify the purpose of the Ohio Eminent Scholar Program.

Objectives of the Eminent Scholar Program

Historically, the Eminent Scholar Program grew out of a 1979 study of quality in graduate and professional programs in Ohio that was mandated by the General Assembly. The mandate requiring such a study was provided by the House Finance and Appropriations Committee. Legislators were actively seeking effective ways to improve the quality of graduate programs and to focus on building strength in specific programs.

A central objective of the Eminent Scholar program, therefore, is to identify Ohio's academic strengths, especially at the graduate research level. (Undergraduate excellence is recognized separately through Program Excellence.)

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[1]Also a part of this document are our responses to drafts one and two as provided by LOEO.

[2]A similar remark remains in the "Costs to the University" section, however.

There are several reasons for doing this:

- To send a message to universities, and to their public and corporate constituencies, that the state is interested in quality and competitiveness.

- To build excellence in our system by nurturing the strengths that we find, both through the addition of another nationally known senior faculty member and through other investments by the state, by the campus, and by third parties that follow from this public recognition of excellence.

- To encourage academic programs across the state to compete for this honor. This entails a review of current strengths and weaknesses, the development of plans by the department to remedy weaknesses that this review finds, the review by the central campus of competing claims for recognition and making determinations of relative quality.

- To encourage more success in obtaining basic research grants because:

  - The general economy is increasingly dependent on technology that comes directly from recent basic research. Investigations that had no specific objective other than advancing knowledge through fundamental inquiry led, for example, to the transistor-- derived from research in solid state physics-- and to the laser-- derived from basic studies in the microwave spectrum of ammonia.[3] These are only two examples from a very long list, and the fact that key applications have been derived from recent basic research is not an isolated phenomenon. A recent study of the Patent Office concluded that the time from the development of new knowledge to its application in useful technology is growing very short. Where once this transition was usually measured in decades, it is now often years or even months.[4]

  - Basic research is an important industry in its own right: for example, some 2,000 jobs on the University of Cincinnati campus are funded in whole or in part by research grants. Extrapolations from this figure

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[3]Frank Press, "Science, Technology, and Economic Growth," NSF Directions Vol. 4 No. 1 (January-February, 1991), p. 8.

[4]New York Times, April 5, 1988.

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statewide show that the number of such jobs is important to Ohio.

Achievements of the Eminent Scholar Program (illustrative)

- We have identified areas of strength upon which the state has begun to capitalize. The polymer program at Akron has won two awards. Engineering at Cincinnati has won several. Ohio State, where the presence of an Eminent Scholar was a central factor in attracting a Nobel Laureate, has proved to be strong in the physical sciences. These are areas of special importance to the Ohio economy. The programs have been strengthened by the awards, and we have been able to use the process of awards determination to inform and improve our capital planning process. The recent appropriation for a Science and Engineering building at Cincinnati reflects that these were very strong programs, important to Ohio's economy, and therefore deserving of a major state capital investment.

- A regular process of evaluation has been established on each university campus to identify the strongest programs for this award. The process has been used to make other campus decisions regarding the allocation of both base budgets and other selective excellence funds (especially Academic Challenge and Research Challenge). This heightened competitive spirit has energized faculty members across the state and has made them better teachers as well as better scholars. We see evidence of this whenever we visit a university campus.

- We are seeing signs of progress in our ability to attract sponsored research, especially in areas strengthened by these awards. As of March 1991, we estimate that the 21 scholars currently in place have directly generated over $16 million in externally sponsored grants and awards. It should also be noted that the amount of research grants will grow over time, while the costs of the Eminent Scholar program are largely one-time. (The next to the last draft of the LOEO report argues that "...it (sponsored research) does not seem to be a useful criterion in assessing the Eminent Scholars program."[1])

[1]Page 12. This language has been replaced with language suggesting that LOEO is unable to determine the importance of external research vis a vis the "statutory requirements" of the program.

Issues of Methodology, Logic, and Interpretation of Fact
In addition to concerns about the essential misunderstanding of the objectives and achievements of the program displayed in the report, we continue to believe that the study used an inappropriate methodology, that it contains numerous errors of fact resulting from selective use of information, and that the logic used to move from evidence to conclusion is fundamentally flawed.

Selection of Programs
The LOZO report questions the quality of the programs that have won Eminent Scholars awards, but fails to provide a factual analysis or even a full description of the extremely rigorous review process that has been employed to select them. This process uses not only national and Ohio researchers-- from government and business research centers as well as from higher education-- it also secures the advice of an internationally respected specialist in the specific area of the Eminent Scholar proposal. We have again appended a list of those who participated as members of the Awards Advisory Panel and stress the importance of the outstanding people whose expertise and integrity were key to this Program's efforts.

The misunderstandings that the report reflects about the quality of the selected programs, as well as such related issues as "eminent vs. imminent" and the perceived limitations in the number of competitive programs remaining in the State, appear to stem from the fact that the report gives no evidence that the process by which the programs are selected was ever investigated. Although structured interviews were conducted on the campuses, university faculty and staff are by definition unfamiliar with key elements of the process used by the Regents' staff because they have no part in it.

For example, much could have been learned about the national standards against which the programs are judged by inquiring about the charge given to the Awards Advisory Panel at each of the three stages of the second tier review, and of the panel's reaction to that charge in the light of its review of both written proposals and information from site visits (including the comments of the specialists brought in for each site visit). Further, the fact that the Awards Advisory Panel discussed specifically and at some length the issue of the level of competitiveness at the end of the last (fourth) round might have been useful in informing this report. If interviews were conducted with any Awards Advisory Panel members or any of the consultants used over the four rounds, there is no indication of such interviews in the report. In addition, no structured interview was

ever conducted with the Regents staff responsible for the program;[4] in fact, the Vice Chancellor in charge of the last round of Eminent Scholar awards was never contacted by anyone from LOEO about any aspect of the Eminent Scholar program.

Board of Regents Review

The report criticizes the Ohio Board of Regents for not evaluating the Eminent Scholar Program within a five year time limit, presumably based on the 1983 beginning of the program. Regents have always intended to evaluate the Eminent Scholar program. The issue for us has not been whether, but when, and in what manner. The mechanism of a site visit at the end of five years proposed in internal documents (not in law) seemed appropriate at the time the program began, but was not used for a number of reasons. First, we must emphasize that the Regents' staff never intended to evaluate individual scholars, much less the program as a whole, on its own. The integrity and quality of an evaluation such as this mandates the use of independent specialists-- the same sort of process used to select the winning programs. This sort of review is expensive both in direct costs and in staff time. We believed that it would not make sense to begin such an effort until a range of scholars had been in place for at least five years. This would allow the review to be more efficient (given economies of scale) and to provide more genuinely comparative insights. Given this, 1990 was clearly too early to begin: using the chart provided by LOEO, it is clear that only one Eminent Scholar had been in place for five years when the LOEO study began, a number that had increased to only four when the study concluded. In addition, there was (and is) no reason to believe that an evaluation was urgent; the Board of Regents has had strong evidence available to it on a continuing basis that the program is working well.

The Board of Regents specifically rejects the implication that it has failed in its responsibility to evaluate this program. We intend to do this at the proper time and in an appropriate manner.

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[4]LOEO asked for various written materials early in its review, and later followed up with written questions on specific issues.

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Other Issues

Use of Endowment Funds
As noted earlier, Regents' rules do not allow the use of general fund monies in matching the Eminent Scholar award. The indirect mechanism LOEO says is being used by one university is clearly wrong; we would appreciate additional information so that we may take corrective action.

'Objective' Criteria on Compelling Statewide Needs/ Excellence of Winning Departments/ Eminence of Scholars
The LOEO report challenges the Eminent Scholar Program in all three of the areas cited above. Unfortunately, in every case, the report demonstrates lack of understanding, a failure to investigate or both. The Regents therefore reject suggestions that any of these areas reflect genuine problems or concerns. We cite the following in support of this:

Compelling Needs
The initial draft report looked at the legislation on the Eminent Scholar Program, found the term "compelling statewide problems," and offered the following interpretation: "'compelling statewide problems' implies a desire for short-term applied research-- 'compelling' problems presumably require prompt action."[1] When the Regents response pointed out that, while this interpretation might reflect the opinion of the authors, it bore no relationship to the core objectives of the Eminent Scholar Program as developed by the Regents and represented by them to the Governor and the General Assembly, the phrase was removed. The text is corrected, but the misconception clearly remains.

Excellence of Winning Departments
As noted elsewhere in this document, the report provides no indication that the process by which winning departments are chosen was investigated or reviewed.

The Eminent Scholar review process (very briefly described) proceeds as follows:

1) Written proposals are reviewed by a panel of outstanding scholars drawn from a range of

[1]Page 10 of the January 28, 1991 draft.

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disciplines across the State. The scholars rate the proposals using an objective scoring mechanism, then meets to debate the final order of their rankings. There is not a set number that must be chosen; in the past, 21-24 of the proposals have been recommended to the Board for second stage review.

2) The panel for the second stage (Awards Advisory Panel) includes national and Ohio leaders in research and higher education; none are affiliated with an Ohio institution of higher education. We believe that these individuals have the highest possible credentials for this demanding task.

3) The second stage review proceeds as in the first, with detailed review and objective rating of extended written proposals.

4) Awards Advisory Panel members participate in site visits. A leading national expert in the specific field serves as consultant to the site visit team and participates in the preparation of the site visit report.

5) The Awards Advisory Panel meets for a day and a half to review site visit reports, discuss written ratings, and to develop a list of recommendations for the Board of Regents.

At every stage in this process reviewers are enjoined to hold the competing programs to absolute standards of excellence as measured against the best in the nation. There is no pressure to provide a minimum number of recommendations: if fewer than nine programs meet the very demanding standards, the Awards Advisory Panel is charged with recommending that smaller number.

We are confident that a careful analysis of this structured, informed, and independent process would effectively address the concerns cited in the report.

Eminence of Scholars Selected

We have commented on this in previous documents and will not attempt to repeat our views in detail here. In summary, we have direct contact with

many of the scholars and believe them to be of the highest quality-- clearly consistent with the objectives of the program. While the LOEO report raises questions, it does so only about a few and in a manner that is no more scientific than our own. To the extent that the report does provide information about the quality of the scholars in place, it is extremely positive.

Need for 'Objective Criteria'

The final report, which clearly retains the bias stated initially, asks that "... the Board of Regents [be required] to adopt formal rules defining key terms in statute, including objective criteria for excellence of a winning department, eminence of a person to be offered a chair, and compelling statewide problems to be addressed."[8] We believe that there are existing objective criteria used in the selection of winning departments and that compelling statewide needs are defined in a way consistent with the purposes of the program as described to the Governor and General Assembly. While an unqualified statement about the status of the Eminent Scholars in place awaits a peer review, the evidence available to us (and that includes the LOEO report) leads us to believe the quality to be very high and appropriate to the program. What is important is that these Scholars move into their positions and that their contributions be assessed in a timely manner. This is a young program and its contributions will become even more important over time.

Adverse Effects: The "Star System"

In refusing to analyze the value of sponsored research to a program designed to attract outstanding researchers, the report first retreats to "statutory requirements" for indications of relevance, then notes that "reliable data" could not be found for comparison. But the report is less cautious when it comes to the (perceived) adverse effects of the "star system." The report expresses considerable concern about this, though it also is not mentioned in statute. Further, though the expression of this concern consumes six paragraphs (more total space than is given to "quality of departments") it is accompanied neither by evidence

[8]Page 24.

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that a "star system" is a current problem in Ohio nor reasonable indications that it will become a serious concern in the future. And, as elsewhere, the logic of this argument is seriously flawed. If Ohio's most able people leave, it will be because other states want to hire them. Ohio's decision to drop its attempts to attract the best will not force other states to do the same. In higher education, as in other fields of human endeavor, there will remain a national market for the most able (a "star system"). The difference in this case is that Ohio would be choosing not to be a part of it.[9]

Our response gives this item so much emphasis because this totally undocumented problem is again cited, together with an equally unsupported speculation to the effect that "existing faculty of equally high quality may decide to leave Ohio," in the concluding section as one of the arguments against the Eminent Scholars program.

The Program May Not be Needed
The Regents staff is cited (correctly) as noting that "...seeking additional academic leadership at the senior level is something they [universities] would have been doing in any case."[10] The report suggests that this means that the Eminent Scholars program is not needed. In fact, of course, what the Eminent Scholars program does is make universities much more successful in this difficult task.

Finances
The draft also discusses the finances of the Ohio Eminent Scholar Program (OESP), using such pejorative terms as "hidden costs",[11] seemingly implying that in the initiation or maintenance of an Eminent Scholar Program, the Regents or the institutions have kept such cost information from the General Assembly or from the public.

We must object to the suggestion that these are "hidden" costs. In the summer of 1990, in developing our budget

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[9]We should note that the report is correct in stating that faculty currently on Ohio campuses cannot become Ohio Eminent Scholars. The reason is to prevent raiding of one Ohio program by another.

[10]Page 22.

[11]Page 17.

recommendations for FY 1992 and FY 1993, considerable thought and discussion was given to the problem of the Eminent Scholar funding, and institutions freely shared their concerns with us. Regents' recommendations, adopted in September 1990, acknowledged first that the Eminent Scholar program had not adequately considered start-up costs (and requested that the base and match move to $750,000 each from $500,000), and linked their request for Eminent Scholar's funding to the intent to seek support in the upcoming capital bill for equipment-related one-time and startup costs. These are public documents, some of which are part of our files and some of which are budget documents prepared for Office of Budget and Management, the Legislative Budget Office, and members of the General Assembly.

In discussing the overall costs and flow of funds (page 15), the LOEO report indicates that institutional general funds subsidize the Eminent Scholars, and seeks to paint this subsidy as a "burden" on university general funds. It is not a "burden"; an objective report would have described it as an "expenditure," made by an institution for a known purpose. Institutions are permitted to use their general funds in this manner, and in trying to achieve "selective excellence," such redirection is exactly what must occur.

We would also offer, as a rebuttal, an alternative explanation for the problem of underfunding of the OESP: inflation. As we discuss in our budget documents, the OESP began in FY 1983 with awards of $500,000 from the state. If the awards remain unchanged in the next biennium, the $500,000 award in FY 1993 would have lost over 30% of its value due to inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. To achieve the real purchasing power that the FY 1983 awards had, the FY 1993 awards would have to be increased to almost $750,000. We have sought increases in the amount of each award for the FY 1992 - FY 1993 biennium to help alleviate this problem.

Since we have not in the past sought or gained an increase in the award, inflation has pushed these expenditures onto the institutions, and they have deemed the program sufficiently important to continue to fund them through their discretionary funds.

The erosion due to inflation and the underfunding of startup costs could account for a variety of other phenomena the LOEO report cites as pathologies related to the program, rather than to the funding for the program, for example the difficulty of recruiting eminent scholars cited in paragraph

three of page 7, and the "early warnings" alluded to on page 18.

We would have been eager to share any or all of these observations and information with LOEO had we been asked. We were never asked.

Finally, the LOEO report continues in its attempt to present some sort of implicit benefit-cost analysis (page 12 of the draft, and inserts, and pp. 13-17), and this draft continues to perpetuate the same type of analytical error that had been incorporated in earlier drafts. We had spelled out in our response to an earlier draft the principles and limitations of benefit-cost analysis, and will not repeat them here.

The error consists in the underestimation of benefits, and such an error is always a threat in performing benefit-cost analyses of broad public programs such as the Eminent Scholars program. The LOEO draft itemizes state and local public expenditures ("costs"). The report lists historical disbursements (money out the door) and projects annual operating costs (the future stream of disbursements). It attempts to balance the ledger by listing revenues that accrue to the program ("benefits"), but fails to consider the future stream of revenues that will be attributable to the Eminent Scholars. Thus, it treats the research funds accruing to the scholars only as one-time revenues when in fact the Eminent Scholars will continue to receive grants far into the future. As we argued in one of our earlier responses, the LOEO draft reports systematically underestimated the benefits of the program; this oversight remains in the final version.

Methodology
Although the report states that "structured" interviews were used on the campuses, it provides no summary of responses on any issue: the quality of the programs, the benefits and costs to a department from having an eminent scholar, etc. The report simply selects quotations to support points that reflect the opinion of the researchers; the reader is left to guess as to the overall nature of the evidence gathered in these "structured" interviews.

Logic
As noted in our earlier comments, we believe the report adduces a great deal of information that clearly attests to the success of the program, and very little, most of it conditional and speculative, that indicates problems. Although, as also noted, there is a plethora of evidence in support of the program either not provided or not credited

in the report, we believe that the document as it stands provides more than sufficient reason to continue the program and none whatever to suspend it.

Bias

The final report eliminates, as noted above, many comments that suggest bias against anything in higher education other than the teaching of undergraduates, but the change does not extend to any alteration of previous conclusions. Indeed, the report even views higher education's instructional role in the narrowest possible fashion. The final recommendation in the report is that Eminent Scholars "carry the same teaching load required of other faculty of the same rank" in order to "...ensure that Eminent Scholars participate in the most important function of the public universities employing them."[12] But just as a preacher can deserve that title even if he preaches only an hour or two a week, so do faculty teach in many different ways. An appropriate example in this case would be an Eminent Scholar who, instead of teaching a class, is supervising a laboratory in which dozens of undergraduate and graduate students are learning how to advance knowledge (very likely using federal or other sponsor funds to defray the costs). Would this meet the criterion of being the "same teaching load?" Would we require those faculty who can compete with the best to work on the frontiers of knowledge to abstain from this work so that they can be "the same" as their colleagues? Would we choose this limitation even if it denies undergraduate and graduate students the chance to work and learn with the best? It appears that the report would favor the narrow view, since in its recommendations for future information gathering on the instructional activities of Eminent Scholars, the only criteria cited are "the numbers, types, and levels of courses taught by Eminent Scholars and their non-Eminent colleagues."

In summary, our perception of the report's bias reflects the fact that it focusses on the most limited possible interpretation of statute in discrediting various strengths of the Eminent Scholar program, but ranges far afield in developing evidence against it.

Campus Observations

Since we understand that it will not be possible to include letters from the campuses about the program as attachments to

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[12]Note that this recommendation also appears to be nothing more than a simple reflection of the opinions of the authors; there is no logical connection between it and the empirical findings of the study.

this document, we have abstracted a few key comments for inclusion:

University of Akron
The Eminent Scholars program is more than a "star-system" program. It is an integral part of the entire Selective Excellence initiative in which the Ohio General Assembly committed itself to providing needed resources to enable us on the campuses to put Ohio's educational system in the first rank."
President William V. Muse (March 7, 1991)

Bowling Green State University
"It has been our experience that the Ohio Board of Regents chose nationally recognized scholars -- experts in the fields under consideration -- to review the Eminent Scholar applications. These reviewers were both rigorous and fair minded in their critique of our programs. BGSU has been successful in securing three Eminent Scholar awards. We have also experienced rejection. In the latter cases, we have used the insights gained from the departmental self-study and the OBOR review to raise the academic quality of the unsuccessful departments. On the basis of these combined efforts, I fully expect these latter departments to gain sufficient strength to be successful in a future round of competition. We are committed to building academic excellence on this campus and have found that the possibility of recruiting an Eminent Scholar provides a powerful incentive to this end."
Provost Eloise E. Clark (February 13, 1991)

Miami University
"Our Eminent Scholar, Dr. Orie Loucks, has worked effectively within the University. One of his projects, to which reference was made in the draft report, is to develop with other science faculty from our School of Business Administration a course on the sustainability of natural resources. Another criterion in hiring our Eminent Scholar was the desire to bring to our environmental science program additional recognition outside the region. Dr. Loucks is not only an excellent researcher but also is significantly involved in projecting the strengths and accomplishments of our programs through his work in regional, national, and international environmental organizations. Finally, and perhaps most important since one of the main goals of the Eminent Scholar Program has been to address pressing state problems, one of Dr. Loucks' own research projects studies the effect of acid rain on forest ecosystems in the midwest--a major problem facing the state of Ohio."
President Paul Pearson (February 8, 1991)

University of Cincinnati
"...the influx of an Eminent Scholar into an academic unit results in the standards of teaching and research in that unit improving, as now other faculty have the type of "role model" that is very positive and results in increased productivity and competence. Hence, although recruiting and integration of an Eminent Scholar require that problems be addressed, the resulting effect is a stronger university and increased capabilities to the State."
Interim Vice President Frank R. Tepe, Jr. (February 13, 1991)

The Ohio State University
"...Ohio's only Nobel Laureate, Dr. Kenneth Wilson of the Department of Physics, came to The Ohio State University because of the presence of a distinguished fellow physicist who was our first Eminent Scholar in that department. Not only has Dr. Wilson's presence enhanced the academic reputation of this institution, he has been instrumental in securing major financial support in the amount of $6.9 million over a period of five years for the Center for Science Education. This Center, dedicated to the improvement of science and mathematics education in our primary and secondary schools, will be of the greatest benefit to the State of Ohio."
Associate Provost Howard L. Gauthier (February 13, 1991)

Ohio University
"The statutory language [for the Eminent Scholars Program] clearly states that the funds are to be used "...for the purpose of fostering eminence in Ohio's academic programs while bringing educational resources to bear on compelling statewide problems."

At Ohio University, this is being accomplished. John Kopchick, our Eminent Scholar in Molecular and Cellular Biology, has served as the nucleus for a group of researchers who have secured over $1 million in grants and research contracts. These dollars in turn have supported jobs for technicians, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students. Albert Eckes and his colleagues in the Contemporary History Institute already have organized a highly successful symposium for Ohio legislators which dealt with the role of state government in furthering Ohio's role in the world marketplace. Further, Eckes also serves as a nucleus for public policy research which has far-reaching potential for identifying worldwide markets, the changing workforce in this country, and the impact of a readily available worldwide workforce on business and industry in Ohio. In addition to the Eminent Scholar matching funds

($500,000) from private funds now dedicated to support purposes defined by the Ohio General Assembly, the Contemporary History Institute in the last two years has brought into the University three endowments totaling $1,250,000 with the income dedicated to library acquisitions and graduate fellowships and also has received a MacArthur Foundation grant of $250,000.

The Eminent Scholar matching funds at Ohio University have come totally from private philanthropy. These dollars have come from outside the state, and thus, for every dollar spent by the State of Ohio, there has been more than a match from outside sources. Clearly, the program has been an outstanding return on investment for the state."
President Charles J. Ping (March 7, 1991)

Conclusion

Teaching is imparting knowledge; research is advancing knowledge. Since knowledge is not static (and never has been), teaching and research are inextricably related at the core of the academic enterprise. As such, the Board of Regents believes that a program such as Eminent Scholars would be desirable for Ohio even if there was no impact on funds attracted to the State or on economic development. But these additional benefits are there, and they are extraordinarily significant in their own right. We are confident that an appropriate evaluation of this program will strongly reinforce our views as to its importance and achievement.

As noted previously, we believe that any evaluation should be more than just simply independent of the Board of Regents or of the participating universities. It should also reflect the advice of those who understand the full range of interests and issues involved; this would mean the inclusion of representatives of national and Ohio government, and of corporate and higher education research centers. Such a group should, we believe, be given a charge consistent with the goals of the program as originally conveyed to the General Assembly and to the public both by the Board of Regents and by the State's higher education community and as evidenced in the many public documents about the program used over the years.

The Board of Regents believes that the Eminent Scholar program has had a beneficial impact on Ohio far greater than the comparatively small amounts invested through state appropriations. Again, we would welcome the advice of an informed and independent panel both in gauging fully the true impact of the program and in determining how it could be operated most effectively.

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